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SUBJECT: DUSD FATA'S MISSILE DEFENSE BRIEF TO NATO PA

¶1. Summary. DASD Fata provided a missile defense briefing to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Portugal, stressing that the proposed long range system was to detect, deter, and defend against missile threats from the Middle East and that the system posed no threat to Russia. Fata stressed that the USG has consulted regularly with Russia on this issue for two years. End summary.

¶2. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Daniel Fata provided a comprehensive briefing regarding US missile defense (MD) intentions to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Madeira, Portugal on May 26. The Science and Technology Committee's standing-room only crowd received an overview of the policy aspects of missile defense from Fata, including his stress on the points that the US is pursuing a missile defense system in Europe to enhance trans-Atlantic security as well as to reaffirm the indivisibility of the security link between the US and Europe. Such a system, he said, would detect, deter, and defend Europe from long range missile threats from the Middle East.

¶3. Fata said the US has been briefing allies for some time now on what the MD system is, is not, why the US is pursuing the system, and how the system complements NATO's ongoing efforts. The US, he said, intends to pursue the development of its long range system in parallel with NATO's short and medium range (ALTBMD) efforts. He said the US had consulted with Russia at the highest levels regularly over the last two years and that the proposed ten interceptor missiles are entirely unarmed and are meant for defensive purposes only, points that several parliamentarians and journalists noted were new information to them. The Missile Defense Agency's chief MD engineer, Dennis Mays, added a briefing on the technical aspects of the system.

¶4. During the Q&A session, a Russian delegate noted worries regarding the effect of US missile defense on the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and previous agreements to avoid permanent stationing of troops in former Warsaw Pact countries. Fata reminded delegates that Russia had expressed concern about the applicability of INF long before the advent of this MD proposal and noted that no agreement permanently prohibited assets in partner nations; the world had changed significantly in recent years, Fata recalled, and Poland and the Czech Republic are allies.

¶5. Russia does not and will not have a veto over this system, Fata stated, regardless of how much we would welcome Russian approval. Secretaries of Defense Rumsfeld and Gates have briefed the Russians regularly for two years and the US has invited them to participate in the project. The Russians, said Fata, have neither rejected nor accepted these offers. Secretary of Defense Gates has proposed to Moscow an experts

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meeting to pursue the issue.

¶16. Responding to a related question, Fata noted that if Poland and the Czech Republic choose not to participate, the system would not be placed there. As sovereign states, they have the ultimate responsibility for their national territory and our defense proposals are entirely based on voluntary partnerships. A Czech parliamentarian responded that his government had made the proposed MD system a priority and that it would not go to a referendum; parliamentary approval being all that was necessary. The US, Fata later noted, would shoulder the financial cost entirely.

¶17. Congresswoman Tauscher responded to a delegate's assertion that the US House of Representatives was divided on party lines regarding MD, noting the bipartisan approach in her subcommittee and in the House as a whole to ensure a viable and interoperable MD system is achieved that guarantees security for all of Europe.

¶18. Much attention was paid to interoperability and coordination with NATO MD proposals. Fata identified the complimentary aspects of the system; i.e., a US long-range counter and a NATO short-range counter. He also noted that NATO continues to identify a real threat of missile attacks from the Middle East, most recently affirmed at the Riga Summit. Fata stressed US hopes to have these systems in operation as soon as possible and that NATO approval of our efforts up to and including adopting the program as its own would be welcome.

¶19. A Latvian delegate, having noted that Fata's briefing was utterly convincing, suggested an extensive public diplomacy campaign by the US in general and Fata in particular. Fata agreed that the public efforts came late in the process, but that the USG had needed President Bush's final policy decision before we could engage the public. Fata himself provided extensive interviews to Portuguese press following the meeting to reaffirm the basic points of his speech

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(particularly useful as Portuguese was not one of the translation languages offered during the session). Fata agreed to meet regularly with journalists and expressed interest in doing digital video conferences from Washington with journalists around Europe and elsewhere.

¶10. DASD Fata and Rep. Tauscher cleared this cable.
Hoffman